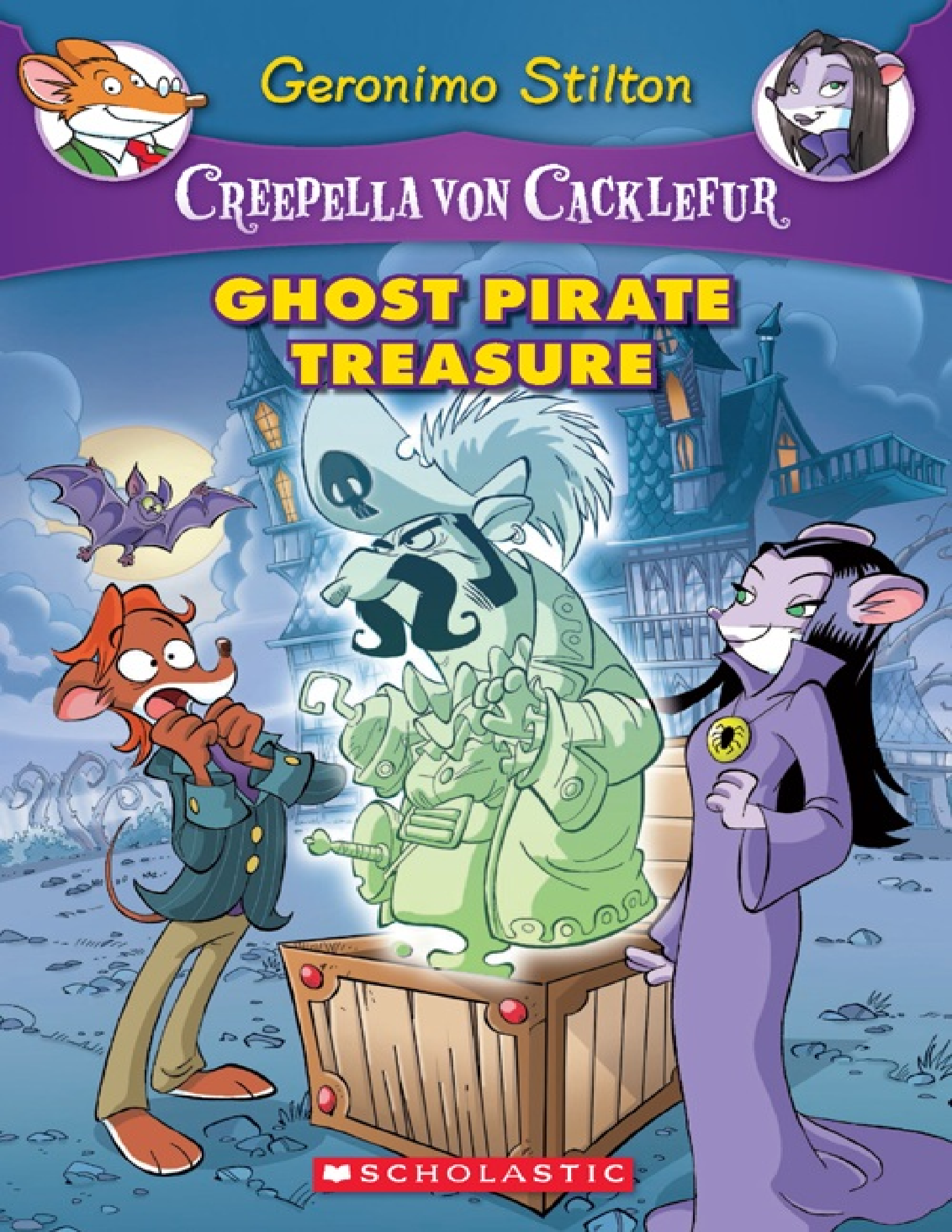

Geronimo Stilton
Creepella von Cacklefur
GHOST PIRATE TREASURE
SCHOLASTIC



I, *Geronimo Stilton*, have a lot of mouse friends, but none as **spooky** as my friend **CREEPELLA VON CACKLEFUR**! She is an enchanting and **MYSTERIOUS** mouse with a pet bat named **Bitewing**. Creepella lives in a **CEMETERY**, sleeps in a marble **sarcophagus**, and drives a **hearse**. By night she is a special effects and set designer for **SCARY FILMS**, and by day she's studying to become a **journalist**! Her father, Boris von Cacklefur, runs the funeral home **Fabumouse Funerals**, and the von Cacklefur family owns the **CREEPY** Cacklefur Castle, which sits on top of a skull-shaped mountain in **MYSTERIOUS VALLEY**.



YIKES! I'm a real 'fraidy mouse, but even I think Creepella and her family are **AWFULLY** fascinating. I can't wait for you to read this **fa-mouse-ly funny** and **SPECTACULARLY SPOOKY** tale!

Geronimo Stilton


Creepella von Cacklefur
Bitewing
Billy Squeakspeare
Grandpa Frankenstein
A journalist who lives in Mysterious Valley and solves spooky cases with her inseparable pet bat, Bitewing.
A famous writer and friend of Creepella.
An extremely mad scientist and an expert in Egyptian mummies.
Snip and Snap
Troublemaking twins and expert spies.
Shivereen
Grandma Crypt
Creepella's favorite niece.
Dolores
Kafka
She loves spiders, and her pet is a gigantic tarantula named Dolores.
The von Cacklefur family's pet cockroach.


Booey the Poltergeist
The mischievous ghost who haunts Cacklefur Castle.
Boneham
The butler to the von Cacklefur family, and a snob right down to the tips of his whiskers.
Baby
He was adopted and raised with love by the von Cacklefurs.
Madame LaTomb
The family housekeeper. A ferocious were-canary nests in her hair.
Chef Stewrat
The cook at Cacklefur Castle. He dreams of creating the ultimate stew.
Boris von Cacklefur
Creepella's father, and the funeral director at Fabumouse Funerals.
Chompers
The von Cacklefur family's meat-eating guard plant.

Geronimo Stilton

CREEPELLA VON CACKLEFUR

GHOST PIRATE TREASURE



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A PACKAGE . . . FROM THE SKY!

The streets in New Mouse City were dark and quiet when the clock struck midnight. Every mouse was snoring in bed, dreaming of cheese sandwiches. Almost every window in the city was shrouded in darkness. Only one light burned that night: MINE!

Oops! I almost forgot to tell you who I am. My name is Stilton, *Geronimo Stilton*. I run *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most famouse newspaper on Mouse Island.

My light was on because I was working late at the office on an **important** article. The subject matter of the article was making me a little nervous. Why? I'll tell you



the headline: **New Mouse City's Greatest Criminals.**

You see, I'm not the kind of mouse who's courageous. Even the names of those mean rats scare me silly. In fact, my tail goes limp when I just look at them: Barry Badguy, Roy the Rat Burglar, and Gary Gangster . . . **YIKES**!

I felt faint, so I opened the window to get some air. A gust of **WIND** cooled me off, and I lovingly looked down on my sleeping city.

Then I noticed dark clouds moving across the sky. The air became cold. Without warning, **HEAVY RAIN** poured down from above.





I watched the rain fall, lost in thought, when suddenly . . .

BANG!



A package fell from the sky. I let out a frightened scream, held out my paws, and caught the package. Then I looked up to see who had dropped it and saw two tiny bat wings zigzagging away through the raindrops.

FLAP! FLAP! FLAP!

It was Bitewing, Creepella von Cacklefur's bat! I closed the window and opened the coffin-shaped package. Inside were a NITE, a NOTEBOOK, and a moldy piece of

CHEESE that stunk like a sweaty sock after a football game! The note read:



I was insulted. She expected me to eat a piece of cheese that was four centuries old? That **STINKY** stuff is unsafe to eat, unless you're a mummified mouse. Then again, I could always add it to my collection of antique cheese rinds.





I put the **PUTRID** cheese aside and picked up the notebook, which smelled just like the cheese. Even so, I kept reading until the sun came up.

It has an **AWFUL** *stench, but . . .*, I mused to myself.

My sister, Thea, a special correspondent at *The Rodent's Gazette,* interrupted my thoughts.



"What's that awful smell?" she squealed, walking into my office.

I gave her the notebook and she read the story.

"The notebook has a dreadful smell, but it's a **beautiful** story!" she said with admiration.

My nephew Benjamin and his friend Bugsy Wugsy read it next.

"It has a dreadful smell, but it's a **beautiful** story!" they both said.



My coworkers read it while pinching their noses.

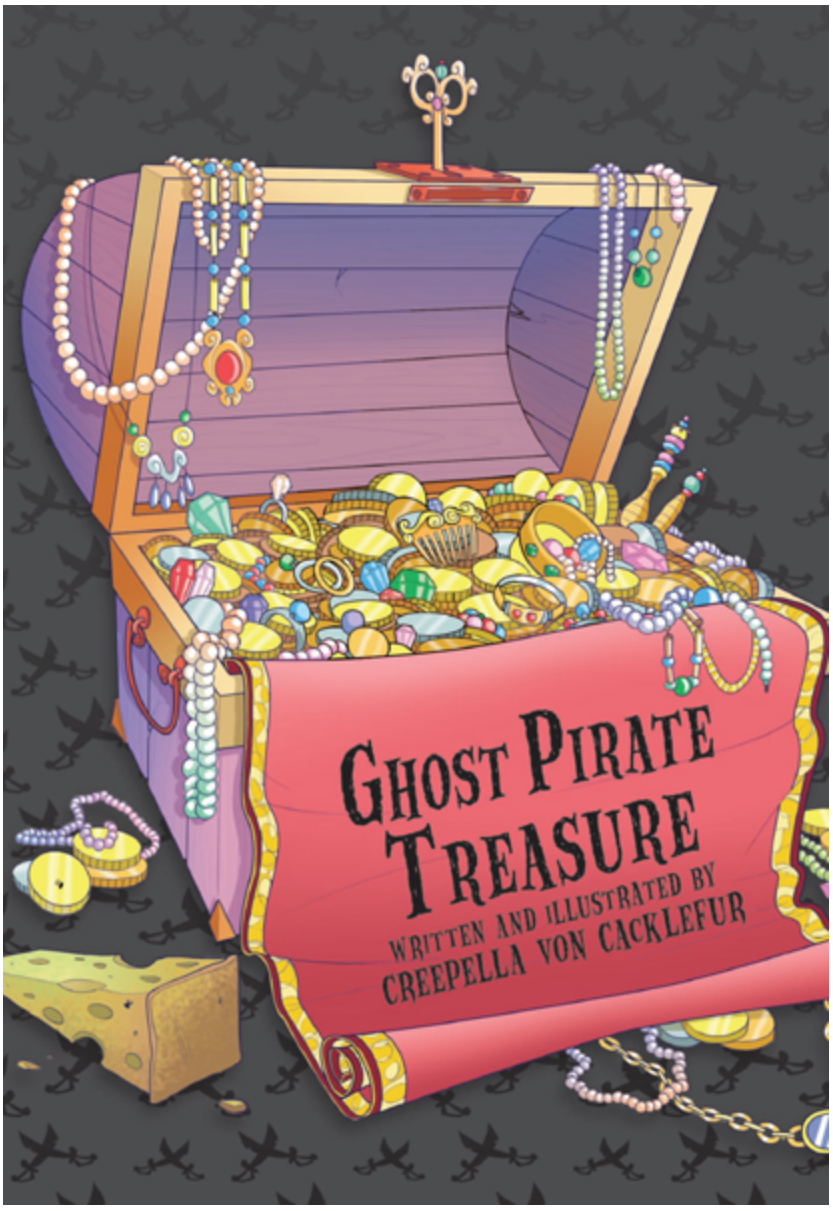
"It has a dreadful smell, but it's a **beautiful** story!" they all agreed.

When my cousin Trap entered the office, he sniffed the air.



"What a **DELIGHTFUL** smell!" he exclaimed. Then he picked up the piece of cheese on my desk and ate it in one gulp! I think his stomach must be made of **IRON**.

Since everyone liked the story, I decided to publish Creepella's book. It is titled **GHOST PIRATE TREASURE**. You're holding it in your hot little **paws** right now. The only thing left for you to do is read it. I hope you like it as much as Trap enjoyed that **stinky** cheese!


GHOST PIRATE
TREASURE
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
CREEPELLA VON CACKLEFUR



BILLY SQUEAKSPEARE was having another restless night. Every time he was about to doze off, one of the thirteen ghosts of Squeakspeare Mansion would burst in with some **RIDICULOUS** excuse.

At midnight, Miss Dustmop, the ghost housekeeper, threw open the door.

"This room needs a little extra **DUST**. I'll take care of it!" she said happily.

A moment later, Bob Woodmouse, the ghost **CARPENTER**, floated in.

"This isn't deep enough," he said, opening a desk drawer. "I'll make it deeper."


I'll just add some more dust!
Cough! Cough!

Between two and three **o'clock**, Dreamella Airhead, the ghost maid, came in and went out at least ten times.



"I can't find my **GLASSES**. They must be here somewhere," she said.

She finally found them under Billy's pillow.

Then, at three, Ted Trimmertail, the ghost gardener, decided to **WATER** the moss that grew under the night table.

At four o'clock, Arf, the ghost dog, jumped on Billy's bed and licked his face. Billy was almost always grateful for Arf's attention, but not in the middle of the night.



"Thank you, Arf, thank you," he said with a yawn. "Now let me sleep!"

Arf seemed to understand. He curled up at the foot of the bed, closed his eyes, and began to doze off. A minute later, he raised his head and perked up his ears.

"GRRRRRRRR!" he growled. He was facing the yard.

Billy tried to calm him down. "Be a good boy, Arf," he said. "There's nobody there. Nobody!"

But Arf ran to the window. He barked and barked and barked.



Woof! Woof! Wooooooooooof!

Billy got up and looked out the window. In the darkness of the night, the yard seemed peaceful and quiet. He went back to bed, but . . .

Woof! Woof! Wooooooooooof!

"Arf, please be quiet!" Billy pleaded. In desperation, he tossed some items in Arf's direction to get his attention:



• a copy of **BLUE CHEESE AND A BLUE HEART**, the new book he was writing;



• an old, raggedy **SLIPPER**;



• an **alarm** clock;



• a **smelly** sock.

But Arf just kept **BARKING** and **BARKING**. Billy put a pillow over his ears and tried to sleep.

Finally, the first timid rays of sunlight appeared over the tops of the Mountains of

the Mangy Yeti, jumped onto the Rancidrat River, and bounced into Billy's bedroom.

Billy sighed with relief. "It's about time!" he exclaimed. "Now my ghosts can all go to sleep. Even the dog!"

Billy snuggled under the covers, hoping to get just a few hours of sleep. He scratched his nose, closed his eyes, and was about to drift off when . . .



He sat up, listening. Outside, an engine was starting, stopping, and then starting again.

"Who would be here so early?" Billy asked himself worriedly.

He went to the window to see who was driving to his house at the crack of dawn. Instead, he saw a yard full of HOLES!

"Wh-wh-what?" he stammered.

Someone had dug big, deep HOLES all over his yard! The lawn looked like an enormouse piece of Swiss cheese. Billy scratched his head.




"Who did this?" he whispered. "And more importantly . . . why?"
B-but . . . wh-why?



Dawn finally came and a tomblike SILENCE filled the mansion. The thirteen ghosts who lived there slept deeply during the day, just like any respectable ghost would. They had to recover from the HARD WORK they did at night.

Normally, Billy would be resting during those peaceful hours, too. But not that morning. Even though he was very tired, he couldn't stop twisting and turning in bed. He was wondering about the holes that had suddenly appeared in his yard.

Even counting the mansion's many **BATS** didn't help him fall asleep.



"I can't figure it out!" he blurted at bat number 1,264. "Maybe Uncle William can come up with an **explanation**."

Billy got dressed and walked down the hall. It was as quiet as an **EMPTY** tomb and as **cold** as the breath of the Abominable Snowrat. He got to the door of the boiler room and found it closed. A **WARNING** sign was nailed to the door.



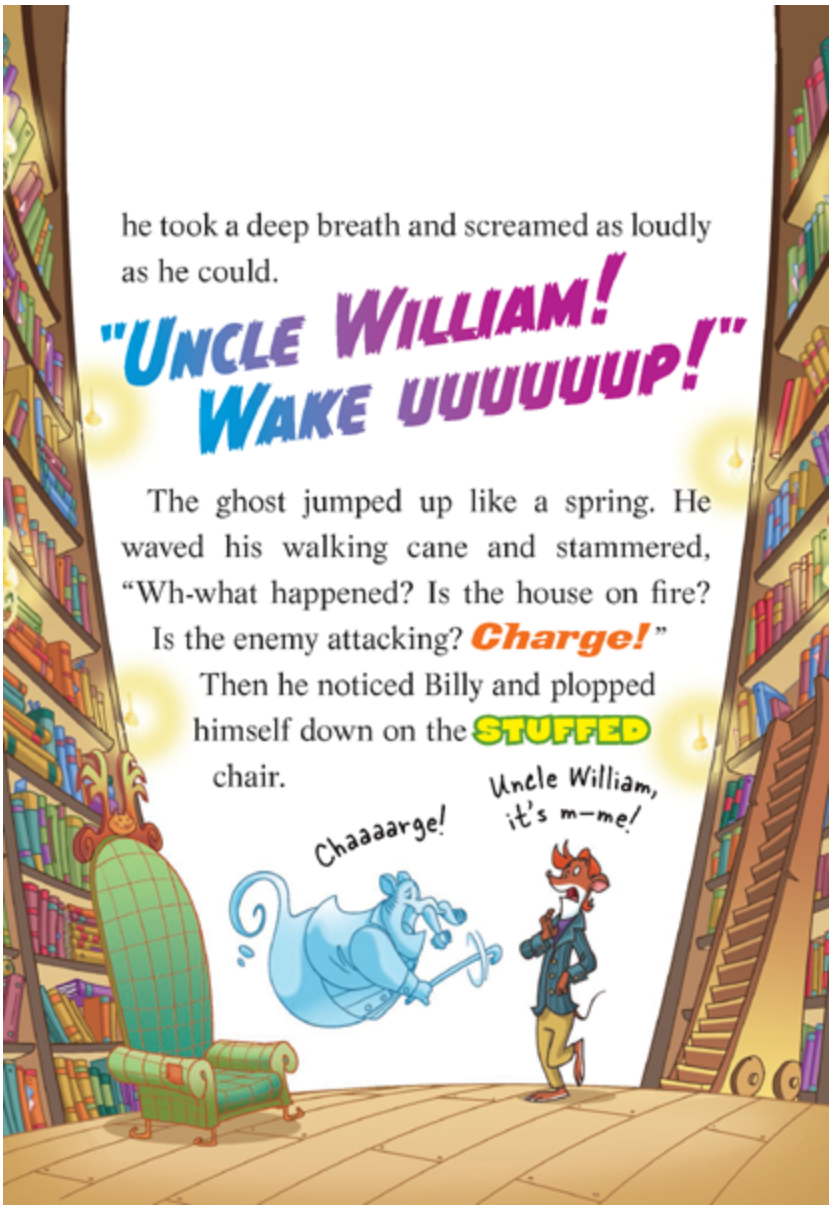
Billy stopped, unsure. Finally, he gathered his **courage** and entered the kingdom of his great-great-great-uncle *William Squeakspeare*. He found himself in a **round** room with wall-to-wall bookcases filled with very OLD books.



His uncle was sound asleep in an old stuffed chair. His long whiskers were rolled up in **curlers**. Billy gently tried to wake him.

"U-Uncle William, w-w-wake up. S-something really **W-WEIRD** has happened."

But his uncle kept sleeping. Billy tried tickling his whiskers, but it didn't work. Finally,


he took a deep breath and screamed as loudly as he could.
"UNCLE WILLIAM! WAKE UUUUUUP!"
The ghost jumped up like a spring. He waved his walking cane and stammered, "Wh-what happened? Is the house on fire? Is the enemy attacking? Charge!"
Then he noticed Billy and plopped himself down on the STUFFED chair.
Chaaaarge!
Uncle William, it's m-me!

"What happened, Nephew? Why did you disturb my sleep?" he asked.

"S-someone dug a l-lot of HOLES in our yard last n-n-night," Billy stuttered.

Uncle William looked puzzled. He thought for a bit and then his face LIT UP.

"I've got it!" he cried. "They were probably looking for the treasure!"

Billy's whiskers trembled with excitement. "Treasure? Why would anyone l-l-look for t-t-treasure in our yARD?"



Uncle William yawned. "You really don't know much, do you, Nephew? Don't you know the LEGEND of Morgan Blackwhiskers, the pirate who stayed at our house and left us a treasure?"

"What?" Billy asked in disbelief.

His uncle nodded. As he continued his story, his eyes grew HEAVY with sleep. "If the gossips in Mysterious Valley were right, the pirate Blackwhiskers was a good friend to your great-great-great-grandmother Lady Squeakspeare. That was four hundred years ago, more or less."



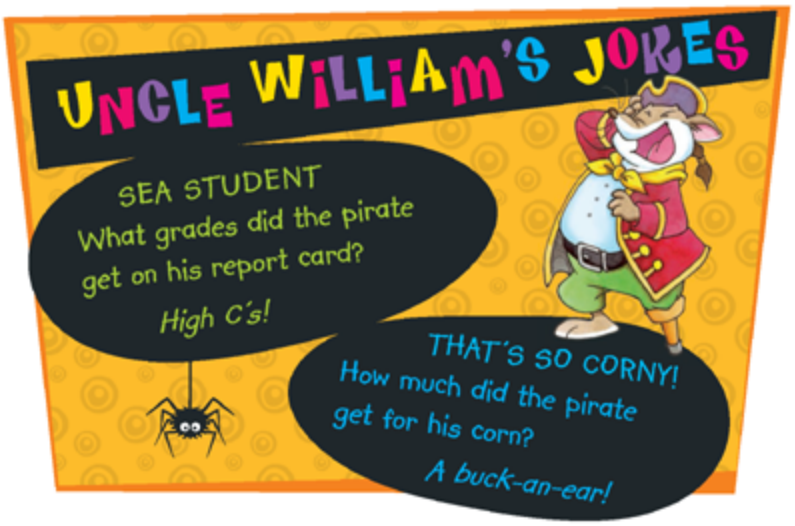
"Lady Squeakspeare?" Billy asked.

"Yes," his uncle replied, "but no one has ever found even a trace of the famouse treasure. And that's all I will tell you now, Nephew. It is time to sleep. But before I drift off, let me tell you some JOKES. Do you know the one about . . ."

He told a few jokes, but soon he fell into a **DEEP** sleep—as deep as a pot of cheese fondue.

Billy quietly slipped out of the room and gently shut the door. "Sweet dreams, Uncle!" he whispered.

"There's a real mystery afoot!" he exclaimed, scratching his nose. "And I know just the mouse who can help me solve it. I've got to call **CREEPELLA**!"





CREEPELLA, HELP ME!

"A layer of moldy-**MOSS** face powder . . . a light touch of snail-slime **lip gloss**. . . perfect! Just the right stuff to start the day."

Creepella von Cacklefur grinned at her reflection in the mirror as she got ready for work. She had a busy day ahead of her, interviewing a team of horror-movie makeup artists. She couldn't leave the house until her fur was the perfect pale shade of a MUMMY.

As she applied one last touch of shimmering caterpillar drool to her cheeks, her **CELL PHONE** rang.



"Hi, Creepella, it's B-B-Billy. Th-there's s-something worrying me."

"Dearest Billy-Willy, don't you **worry**," Creepella said.

"Why n-n-not?" Billy asked.

"Because your sweet Creepella has everything under control," she replied **TRIUMPHANTLY**.

"A-already?"

"Of course!" Creepella told him. "And they are splendidly horrid!"

"Well, that's good, then," Billy said, then stopped. "What are you t-talking about?"

"Why, I'm talking about our marvelous **costumes**, of course!" she said.

"C-costumes?" repeated Billy, baffled.

"Exactly! Costumes!" Creepella cried. "**Lady Needletail** did a fabumouse job!

For my rotted-flower **costume**, we had quite a discussion on the position of the petals. But your costume—"

"M-my costume?" Billy interrupted.

"Your costume is perfect," Creepella assured him. "You'll look great . . ."

"Wh-what?"

". . . dressed as a **GARBAGE CAN**!" she finished. "Wasn't that a truly **DISGUSTING** idea?"

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed a shocked Billy.

"What do you mean?" Creepella replied. "Didn't I tell you, dearest Billy? I asked the most fashionable designer in Mysterious Valley to have our costumes ready for tonight's **GRAND BALL**!"



"G-grand ball? Tonight?"

"Billy! Do I have to explain everything to you?" Creepella said with a sigh. "Today is the annual **Festival of Melancholy**, when all of Mysterious Valley celebrates the gloomiest day of the year. We'll start with a **supper** here at the castle and then go to the academy for the **MELANCHOLY GRAND BALL**."

"I d-don't know anything about it!" Billy insisted.

"**RATS** and **BATS**, Billy! Do you really want me to lose my patience?" Creepella snapped. "We all got our **invitations** weeks ago!"

Suddenly, Billy remembered. He searched furiously in his desk drawer and took out a very **ELEGANT** purple card.



He had completely forgotten about it—probably because he didn't like parties much.

"Creepella, I don't think it's such a g-good idea," he **stammered**. "I'm not a g-good dancer."

"Nonsense! Don't say such **FOOLISH** things!" Creepella scolded. "There is no excuse to miss the **MELANCHOLY GRAND BALL**!"

Billy sighed. He knew he would never be able to change Creepella's mind.

"Fine, I'll come," he answered. "But before I do, you have to help me solve a mystery."

Creepella adored a good mystery. Her bright green eyes shone at the mention of the word.

"What is this mystery about, dearest Billy-Willy?" she asked eagerly.

"This morning I found the mansion's yard full of HOLES!" Billy explained. "Uncle William says that someone is looking for Morgan Blackwhiskers's treasure."

"Morgan Blackwhiskers! The most famouse pirate in Mysterious Valley?"

"That's the one!" Billy answered. "It seems he was a guest at Squeakspeare Mansion long ago."

"Billy, this sounds like an AWESOME mystery!" exclaimed Creepella. "We'll figure out who dug those holes . . . and with a little

bit of luck, we'll also find the **treasure**!"

"Thanks, Creepella!" Billy said with relief. "I knew I could count on you."

Creepella ended the call and happily **clapped** her hands.

"This will be an absolutely spine-chilling horror story!" she cried. She turned to her pet bat, Bitewing, who was flying around her head.

"Bitewing, get ready! After **breakfast**, we need to solve a mystery!"

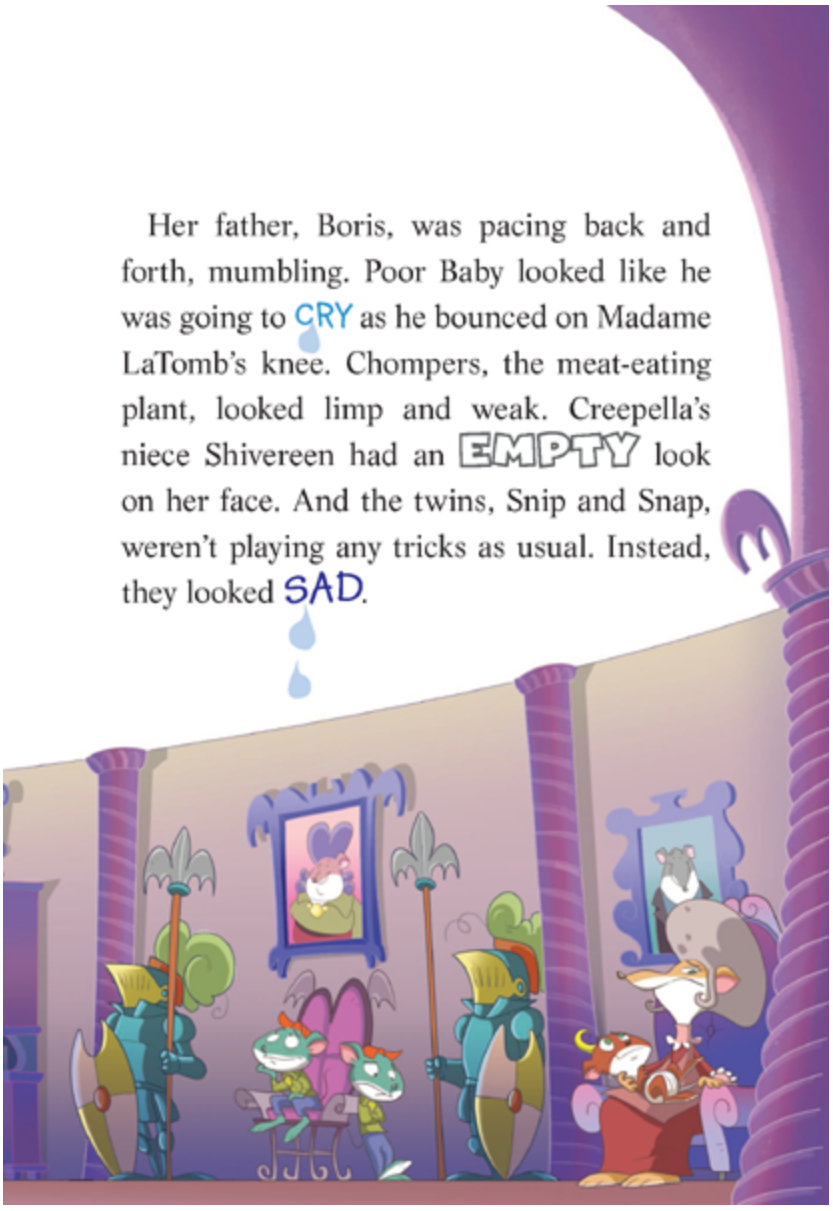


Empty Bellies at Cacklefur Castle

Creepella entered the dining room and found her whole **family** there. She quickly noticed that something very **weird** was going on. The **STRANGE** von Cacklefur family was acting even stranger than usual.



Her father, Boris, was pacing back and forth, mumbling. Poor Baby looked like he was going to CRY as he bounced on Madame LaTomb's knee. Chompers, the meat-eating plant, looked limp and weak. Creepella's niece Shivereen had an EMPTY look on her face. And the twins, Snip and Snap, weren't playing any tricks as usual. Instead, they looked SAD.



"What's the matter?" asked Creepella.

"It's a TRAGEDY!" Grandma Crypt answered. "Chef Stewrat didn't make the stew for breakfast!"

Creepella was shocked. Chef Stewrat served the same thing at every meal: a big pot of stew made from ingredients that only the von Cacklefurs could appreciate (and digest)!

Chef Stewrat BURST into the room. "I'M RUINED!" he cried. "My cooking career is over! Tonight everyone is supposed to prepare something special for the MELANCHOLY GRAND BALL. But I just can't do it!"

"I'm covering the furniture with silver COBWEBS," interrupted Grandma Crypt.



"We have trick candles for the Melancholy Cake," said Snip and Snap.

Boris nodded. "I've composed a poem called

'Dark and Dreary Tombs'

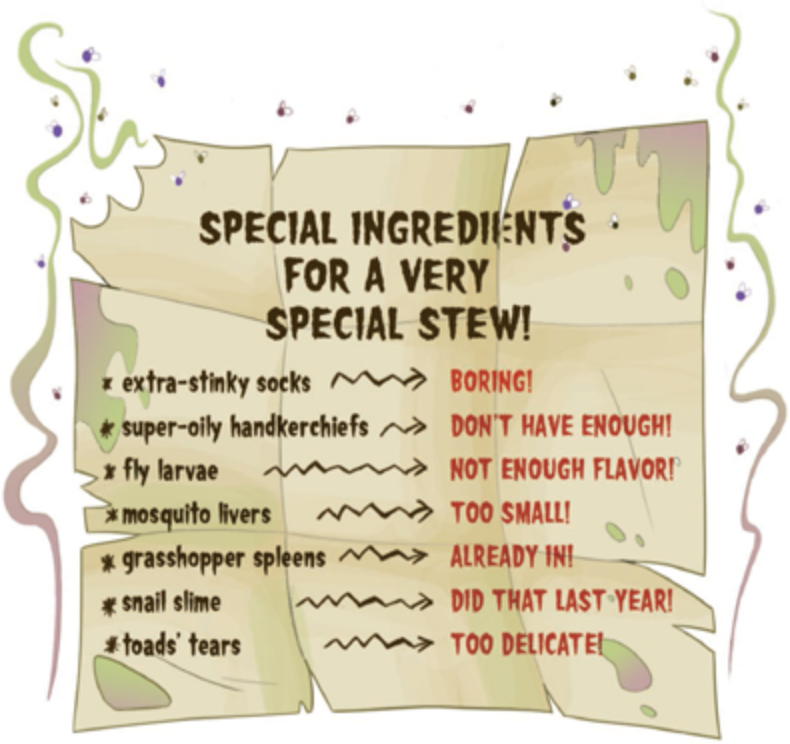
to be read before dinner," he said.

"Dinner! That's my problem!" exclaimed Chef Stewrat. "You see, I want to make an extra-SPECIAL stew for the dinner tonight."

"I think that's an EXCELLENT idea," Creepella said encouragingly.

"Yes, but to make a SPECIAL stew, I need an extra-SPECIAL ingredient," whined Chef Stewrat. "I have tried everything, but nothing is working. If I can't make a SPECIAL stew, I'm sunk."

He handed Creepella a piece of oil-stained paper.



Creepella tried to CHEER him up. "Don't worry, Chef Stewrat. I'll find you the right ingredient," she said.

"Really?" he asked, wiping a TEAR from his eye.

"Of course!" she replied. "In the meantime, why don't you make us a DELICIOUSLY DISGUSTING breakfast stew? We von Cacklefurs can't live without it!"



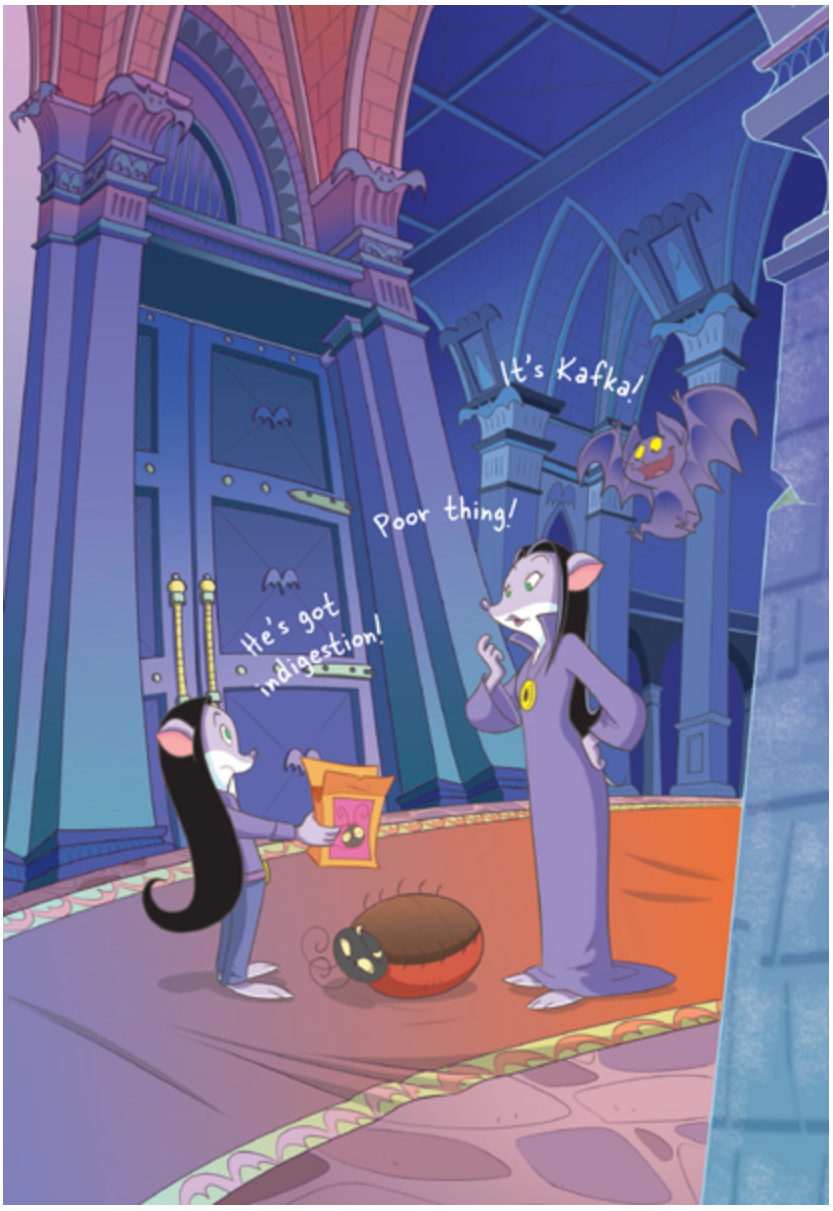


Creepella had to hurry, or she would be late for her meeting with Billy. She RAN to the door but bumped into something in the hallway.

"Who left a pillow in the middle of the hall?" she asked.

"That's not a pillow," said Shivereen. "It's Kafka!"

The von Cacklefur family's pet cockroach lay on its back on the floor with its legs in the air. Its tummy was so SWOLLEN it looked like a feather-stuffed pillow.


It's Kafka!
Poor thing!
He's got indigestion!

Creepella knelt down next to the cockroach. "Poor Kafka. What's wrong?"

"He's got INDIGESTION," Shivereen explained. She held up a box with the words



on it. "I wanted to give him a treat, but he gobbled the whole box in one bite!"

Creepella shook her head. "You've got such a SWEET TOOTH, Kafka! Get up and get moving and you'll feel better soon."

Moments later they were all in Creepella's Turborapid 3000, zooming toward Billy's mansion. They found him in the yard, surrounded by holes.

Kafka crawled around, sniffing. Shivereen

started snapping PHOTOS. Creepella examined the holes as Bitewing flew around her head.

"Very interesting," she remarked. "They look like they were DUG by a professional."

"Wh-what makes you say that?" Billy asked.

"I took a class on mysterious wells, holes, and tunnels at the Shivery Arts Academy," Creepella explained. "The holes are all the same size, and the ROCKS are piled neatly beside each other. That's the mark of a real pro."

"Could the digger be d-d-dangerous?" Billy asked, his whiskers trembling.

"Of course!" teased Bitewing.

Creepella decided to have a little fun with her friend Billy.


These photos could be useful!


Of course he's dangerous!
Is he d-d-dangerous?
It was a professional!

"You are in graaaaave daaaaanger!"

she said in a spooky voice.

"D-d-danger?" Billy looked faint.

"Just kidding!" Creepella said. "This night digger is MYSTERIOUS, that's all. Now come with me!"

"Where are we g-g-going?" whispered Billy.

"To the Shivery Arts Academy!" she replied. "Somebody must be looking for Morgan Blackwhiskers's treasure. If we want to beat him to it, we've got to learn more about the treasure. And I know exactly who can help us!"

"Auntie, maybe I should stay here with Kafka," Shivereen piped up. "He doesn't look well."

Kafka was on his back again, groaning with a **TUMMY ACHE**.

"Good idea, but loan me your camera," Creepella said. "Those **PHOTOS** you took might be helpful."

Then Creepella, Billy, and Bitewing ***sped away*** in the purple hearse.

What nobody knew, however, was that some spies behind a bush were **WATCHING** their every move. . . .





Creepella's car **SCREECHED** to a stop in front of the **SHIVERY ARTS ACADEMY**.

"The first stop is Professor Dubloon's office!" she exclaimed.

"Who's th-that?" asked Billy timidly.

"He teaches **pirate history**," explained Creepella. "He's an expert on just about everything there is to know about the **pirates** who sailed the seas."


SHIVERY ARTS ACADEMY
Leaning Tower
Monster Science Lab
Salon of Shrieks and Fainting
Balcony of Whispers
Chilling Screams Classroom
Library of Horror Authors
Here's the academy!

Excited, Creepella grabbed Billy by the paw and *DRAGGED* him through the halls of the academy. Finally, they stopped at a door with a PLAQUE on the front.



Creepella was about to knock on the door when it opened by itself. A friendly-looking face with a black patch over one eye peeked out.

"Are you here already?" asked the old rodent. He lifted his strange-looking HAT in greeting. "I didn't expect you so soon!"

"Y-you were waiting for us?" asked Billy.

"Of course!" Dubloon replied. "It's not every day that one gets to meet such an important pair of scholars."

"Sch-scholars? What do you m-mean?" Billy asked **suspiciously**.

Dubloon frowned. "Aren't you the Syllable Sisters, the famouse interpreters of pirate language?"

"Professor, you're such a **KIDDER**!" laughed Creepella.

"Trumpeting treasures! I know that voice. It's Creepella!" the professor exclaimed, lifting his eye patch. Then he ran toward Billy.

"Actually, you do look a little **DIFFERENT**," Dubloon said.



"*Th-that's* Creepella," Billy said, pointing.

"Of course!" the professor exclaimed, turning to Creepella. He winked at her. "Then who is this less glamorous friend of yours?"

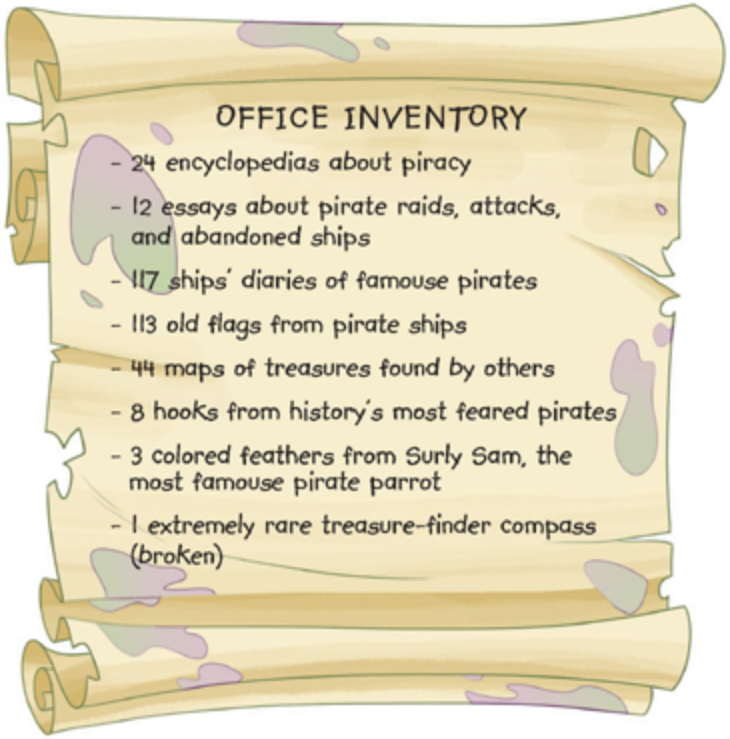
"That's Billy Squeakspeare, the *writer*!" Bitewing piped up.

Professor Dubloon looked **EXCITED**. "Wondrous whales! A writer! He's brought me an awesome pirate's **biography**, hasn't he?"

"Actually, we're here because we need to learn about the pirate **Morgan Blackwhiskers**," Creepella explained. "It seems he hid his **treasure** in my friend's yard years ago. Do you know anything about it?"

"Hmm, let's see," he replied. "Blackwhiskers, you say?"

Creepella and Billy followed the professor into his office. Strange OLD OBJECTS crowded the bookshelves. A **yellowed** sheet of paper was pinned to the wall.




Let me see. . . .

The professor rummaged through the volumes of old, dusty books until he finally found what he was looking for.

"Ah, here it is!" Dubloon cried. "According to the Encyclopedia of Pirate Journeys, Blackwhiskers passed through the Mysterious Valley and was a guest at Squeakspeare Mansion."

Creepella nudged Billy. "You see? We came to the right place!"

Dubloon kept reading. "Because he was somewhat of a gentlemouse, Blackwhiskers gave a GIFT to his hostess, the beautiful Lady Squeakspeare. It was a treasure from one of his pirate raids."

"D-d-does anyone know where it's h-h-hidden?" asked Billy hopefully.

The professor shook his head. "No, my dear writer. NO ONE knows."

"So the only one who would know exactly where Blackwhiskers buried his treasure would be . . . his ghost?" Creepella asked.



"Unfortunately, Blackwhiskers was the most FORGETFUL pirate in history," Dubloon said. "Once he BURIED his treasures, he immediately forgot where he had put them!"

"Then it very well could have been his ghost who DUG all of those holes in the yard!" Creepella said, her voice growing louder with excitement. "What a great story! A mysterious treasure, a pirate, and a ghost, all in one! I'll write the greatest scoop of the century!"

Professor Dubloon frowned. "Well, if my

studies are correct, then Blackwhiskers can't be the digger," he said. "In fact, his ghost can only **appear** after the treasure is found. That's according to every legend I've ever read."

Billy was DISCOURAGED. "Then there's no solution," he said with a sigh.

But Creepella wasn't disappointed. "Don't worry, **Billy-Willy**, we'll find the treasure," she promised. "Then the ghost of that famouse pirate will appear and I'll get my SCOOP. All we need to do is figure out who is digging up your yard!"



Creepella **DASHED** out of the office without even saying good-bye to Professor Dubloon. Billy followed.

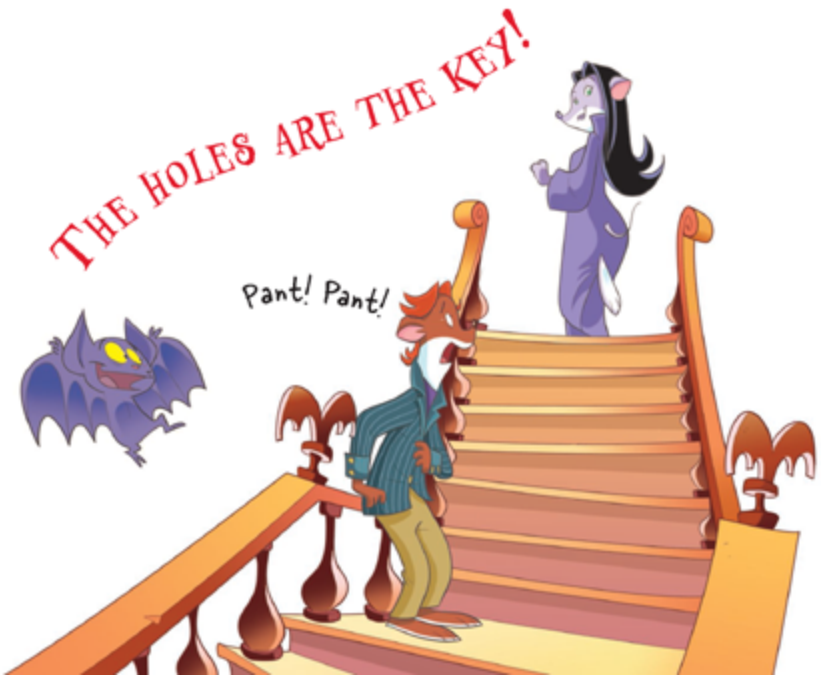
"Creep . . . Creepella, where are we going?" he asked.

"To see Professor Cleverpaws, of course!" she replied.

"Another p-p-pirate **expert**?" Billy asked.

Creepella shook her head. "No, we don't need another pirate expert right now," she said. "We need to discover who dug those holes! They are the KEY to this mystery."

Creepella began to climb the **MOLDY** steps that led to the top of a tall turret. "Professor Cleverpaws is an expert on hiding places," she explained. "I want to show her a PHOTO of the holes. Maybe she can figure out who dug them."



When they reached the top of the steps, Billy read the PLAQUE on the door:



"I was her best student," Creepella revealed proudly before knocking on the door.

"Who's there?" asked a voice from inside. An instant later, an ATHLETIC-looking rodent opened the door. She wore a HUGE pair of binoculars around her neck.

"Creepella, is that you?" she asked. "My *exceptional* snooper student! Are you here to do some research? And is this your assistant?"

"Actually, I'm B-B-Billy Squeakspeare," Billy told her. "I'm a writer."

"Nice to meet you," said the professor. "Come in."

Creepella and Billy followed the professor into her study. The room was filled with binoculars, 

, and other instruments that could be used to search for hidden places.

"We're looking for a treasure," Creepella explained. "But we're not the only ones looking for it. I believe a professional digger is after the treasure."

Creepella handed Shivereen's camera to the professor. Professor Cleverpaws zoomed in on a photo and examined it carefully.

"Hmm, you're right!" she said finally. "This is the work of a PROFESSIONAL—and I think I know who it is!"



Back at Squeakspeare Mansion, Kafka the cockroach was still groaning from his tummy ache. Shivereen felt sorry for the poor bug, so she decided to tell him a story.

"Once upon a time, there was a big spider. It lived all by itself in the cemetery, inside the **TRUNK** of an old tree. . . ."

"They're wrapped up in the story," WHISPERED a voice from behind the bushes. "Let's go now!"

Then Tilly, Milly, and Lilly, the Rattenbaum triplets, tiptoed out from behind the bush. Something else FOLLOWED them, moving

very slowly. The leaves crackled under the creature's many feet.

"Ziggy, be quiet!" Tilly hissed at the creature—a large **millipede**, which followed the girls wherever they went.



The triplets hopped into their old, beat-up car. Ziggy slowly climbed into the backseat, and Milly **SPED** away. Soon the shadow of Rattenbaum Mansion loomed on the horizon. The formerly grand house looked like it was falling apart.

"I knew it! He's here," said Tilly.

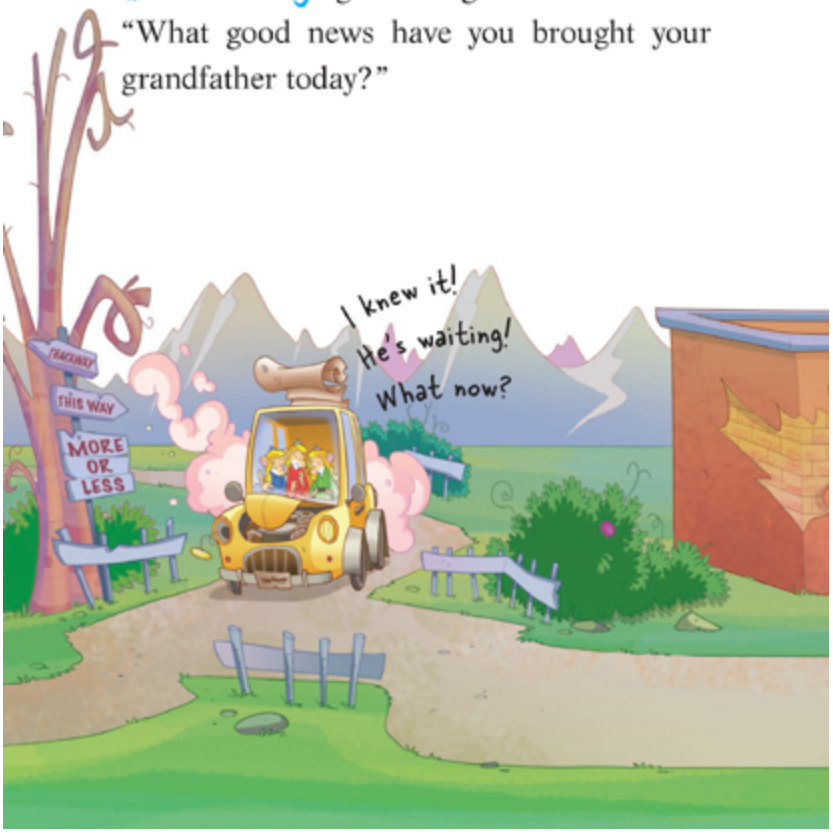
"I knew it! He's waiting!" added Milly.

"I knew it! What now?" asked Lilly.

At the gate of the old building stood the odd shape of Shamley Rattenbaum, as still as a statue. He wore a **TATTERED** suit and

a collapsed top hat. When he saw the triplets, he opened his arms wide.

"My SOPHISTICATED, lovely, enchanting granddaughters!" he cried. "What good news have you brought your grandfather today?"



The triplets *slowly* got out of the car, but none of the girls answered him.

"My dearest triplets, please tell me," Shamley said. "Mission accomplished?"



"Actually . . . ," began Tilly.

". . . mission . . . ," continued Milly.

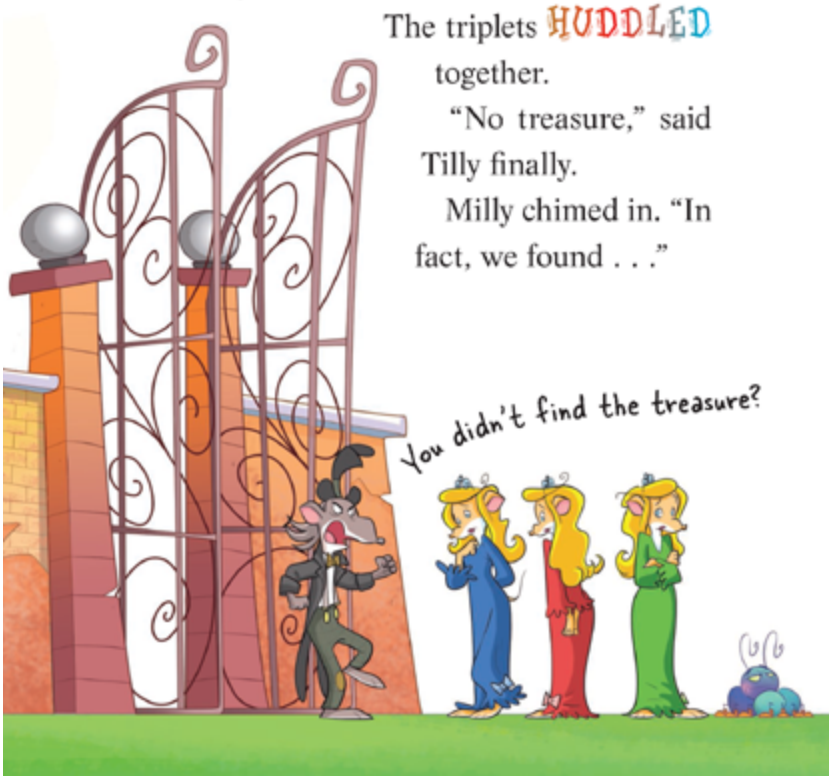
". . . incomplete!" finished Lilly.

"***WHAT DID YOU SAY?***" Shamley roared furiously. "***YOU DIDN'T FIND THE TREASURE?!?***"

The triplets HUDDLED together.

"No treasure," said Tilly finally.

Milly chimed in. "In fact, we found . . ."



". . . only an empty can," finished Lilly.

"Unbelievable!" cried Shamley. "Ziggy is a professional digger. How could you have failed?"

Tilly, Milly, and Lilly defended themselves.

"We worked all night!"

"Maybe that story you heard is false!"

"Maybe the truth is that there is no treasure!"

Shamley got angry. "What do you mean it's not true? A respectable GENTLEMOUSE at the Snob Society Rodents' Club told me the tale! He said that Morgan Blackwhiskers left a treasure there for Lady Squeakspeare."

"Then maybe someone else found it," Milly suggested.

"Impossible! We would have heard about it," Shamley pointed out. "Now go back to Squeakspeare Mansion and keep looking!"

The triplets tried to protest.

"But . . ."

"No . . ."

"If . . ."

Their grandfather cut them short. "No excuses! Get moving, and don't come back with empty ! We can't invite anyone over for a high-society feast unless we can make some . . . *ahem* . . . *minor* repairs to the mansion."

Ziggy the Millipede



Job: Official companion to the Rattenbaum triplets

Original Home: The Moccasin Mountains

Age: Old enough to buy shoes in adult sizes

Notable Quirks: He has several thousand pairs of shoes.

Favorites: He enjoys designer footwear, but he'll buy shoes on sale if they're comfortable.

Styles: In the summer, he wears clogs, sandals, and flip-flops. In the winter, he wears wool socks and ski boots. At home, he always wears slippers.

Strengths: He is an excellent digger and he always finishes a job.

Weaknesses: He has a short attention span and tires easily.



Back at the academy, Professor Cleverpaws had identified the digger immediately: Ziggy the **millipede**, her ex-assistant. Ziggy had left the academy to work for the Rattenbaums.

"It looks like those **BRATTY** triplets are behind this mystery!" Creepella exclaimed as she and Billy walked back to the hearse. "Billy, let's go back to your mansion. We have to find the treasure before those three do. I want to be the first to see **Blackwhiskers** appear!"

The **Turborapid 3000** roared into

Billy's driveway right as the Rattenbaums' old car pulled up, trailing big puffs of gray exhaust.

"Rats and bats!" Creepella said with a frown. "Those snobby pretenders are here already!"

The triplets immediately circled Billy, showering him with fake compliments.

"Well, well," said Creepella, eyeing them carefully. "What brings you here?"

The three mice barely looked up.

"Ugh! The annoying one is here, too," said Tilly.

"So irritating!" added Milly.

"And creepy!" Lilly said.

"Of course I'm here," Creepella snapped. "And I've got some news about a certain hole digger you know."

The triplets looked ALARMED.



"We don't know—"

"—what—"

"—you're talking about!"

At that moment, Ziggy crawled out of their car, looking sleepier than ever.

"There he is!" Creepella cried, pointing to the **millipede**. "He dug all of the holes in Billy's yard!"

"Nonsense!" insisted Milly. "He's **Ziggy**, our pet millipede."



"He doesn't know anything about your HOLES!" Tilly blurted out.

"Besides, you don't have any proof!" declared Lilly.

"I'm SURE you three are behind this!" Creepella argued. "And now you've come back to dig some more! That's stealing, you know."

"Absolutely not!" Tilly cried. "We're here to invite Billy—"

"—to be our date—" continued Milly.

"—to the Melancholy Grand Ball!" finished Lilly.

Creepella got angry again. "Back off! Everybody knows that Billy is escorting ME to the ball!"

Shivereen ran up before an argument could begin. "There you are, Auntie. Kafka is much better. Look!"

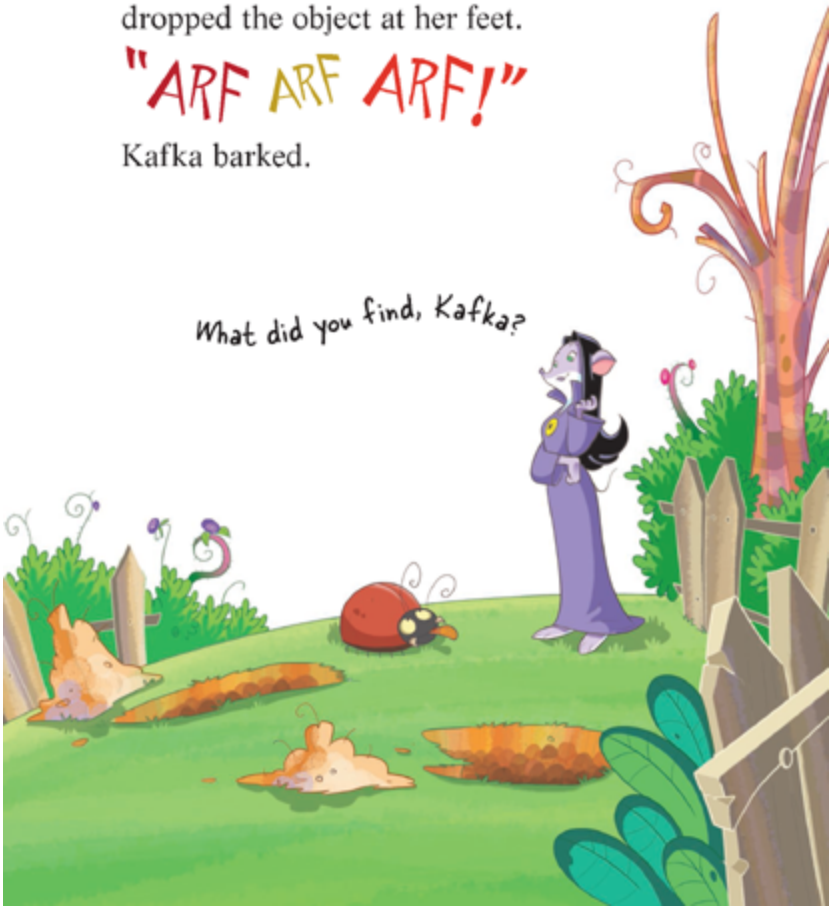
The von Cacklefur cockroach was trotting all over the yard, happy to be feeling better. He was having fun exploring the holes, and his tummy didn't hurt anymore. In fact, he was hungry. He sniffed around for something to MUNCH on.

Kafka came out of a hole with something in his mouth—but it wasn't something he

could eat. So he trotted up to Creepella and dropped the object at her feet.

"ARF ARF ARF!"

Kafka barked.



The Hole Digger Unmasked

The object that Kafka placed at Creepella's feet was not a TWIG. She picked it up and examined it.

"Rats and bats!" she exclaimed. "This is a LITTLE SHOE!"

"What would a shoe be doing in my yard?" asked Billy.

The triplets exchanged nervous glances and quickly walked BACKWARD.



Creepella picked up Kafka. "Where did you find it, little one?" she asked him.

Kafka pointed one of his antennae at the deepest hole in the yard.

"ARF ARF ARF!"

Bitewing translated for Billy, who was the only one who didn't understand Arfese, Kafka's language.

"He found it in that hole down there," the bat said.

Creepella placed Kafka back on the ground and examined the shoe with the eye of a detective. She brushed the dirt off it to reveal a number on the sole: 822.

Creepella approached the millipede. Ziggy was as pale as a ghost and trembling like a dry leaf.

"Zigi zigizi zig zig?" Creepella asked in millipede language.

"Zigi, zigi, zig. Zigzig," mumbled Ziggy.

Creepella gave him a kind smile. "Ziggi!"

Billy was **AMAZED**. "Creepella, you understand him?"

"*Of course!*" she replied. "Everybody knows Millipedese. And look here. . . ."

Creepella gently turned Ziggy onto his BACK and began to count the numbers on the soles of his little shoes.

"Eight hundred twenty . . . eight hundred twenty-one . . . Look here, what a coincidence! His missing shoe is number eight hundred twenty-two!" she exclaimed, pointing to one tiny bare foot.

Meanwhile, the triplets were trying to make a hasty *RETREAT* to their car.

Shivereen noticed their attempted escape.


The millipede did it!
Look who it belongs to!
Oooooh!

"Look, Auntie, the Rattenbaums are getting away!" she cried.

"Stop right there!" Creepella shouted. "This shoe is proof that your **millipede** dug all of these holes. Poor thing! He told me that you promised you'd increase his food to a full loaf of **MOLDY** bread a day. Tell me, what were you looking for? Perhaps . . . a **treasure**?"



"How **dare** you!" protested Milly.

"Ziggy must have done it all on his **own**," said Tilly.



"We don't know anything about **pirate loot**," added Lilly.

Creepella crossed her arms and **smiled** slyly. "Why did you use the word **Pirate**?" she asked. "I didn't say anything about pirates!"



The three mice turned as PALE as mozzarella. They picked up Ziggy and shoved him into the backseat of the car.

"Let's get away from this riffraff!"

"Accusing us of digging holes!"

"We have better things to do!"

"How do you think Grandfather will take it?" asked Tilly as she climbed into the car.

"This means there will be no feast before tonight's MELANCHOLY GRAND BALL," added Lilly.

"And no one will want to escort us to the GRAND BALL, either," sighed Milly.



The Rattenbaums' car STALLED and sputtered. Shivereen had time to talk to Ziggy through the window.

"Here, take this!" she whispered, handing him a small PACKAGE. "It's Kafka's candy. He's very happy to give it to you. Besides, you didn't realize you were doing anything WRONG!"

"Zigziggi!" gurgled Ziggy gratefully. Then he licked Shivereen's nose.

"Those three are so dishonest," said Creepella as the car drove off, shooting out puffs of smoke. "At least they won't be able to find the treasure!"



Bitewing flew around her head. "By the way . . . where's the treasure? Where's the treasure? Where's the treasure?"

Creepella thoughtfully **twirled** a strand of her long black hair around her finger. She began walking around the garden, talking out loud.

"Maybe they were looking in the **WRONG** place," she mused. "But **Blackwhiskers** always buried his treasures, right?"

Shivereen and Billy nodded.

"Then the **YARD** must be where the treasure is hidden," Creepella reasoned. "Maybe the holes weren't deep enough."

Billy moved to follow her, but he tripped in a **HOLE**. He fell into a big old fountain



hidden by a prickly thornbush, landing in the murky water.

Splash!

"Oh, Billy, you can be so clumsy sometimes!" Creepella scolded him.

"Silly Billy!" Bitewing teased.

Billy climbed out of the fountain, dripping wet. "Actually, there's s-s-something—"

"Quiet, please, Billy," Creepella said. "I'm trying to think!"

"B-b-b-but I see s-s-s-something under—" Billy stammered.

Shivereen interrupted him this time. She pointed to the top of his head.

"What's that on your head? A frog?"

"A frog . . . with a gold coin in its mouth!" Creepella announced, shocked. She



carefully climbed into the fountain and felt along the **BOTTOM** with her paw.

"Just as I thought!" she cried. "There's something **peculiar** under here!"

"Th-th-that's exactly what I've been trying to t-t-tell you," Billy said, but Creepella wasn't listening. With a sigh, Billy reached into the fountain and pulled up a **heavy** old treasure chest made of **METAL**.

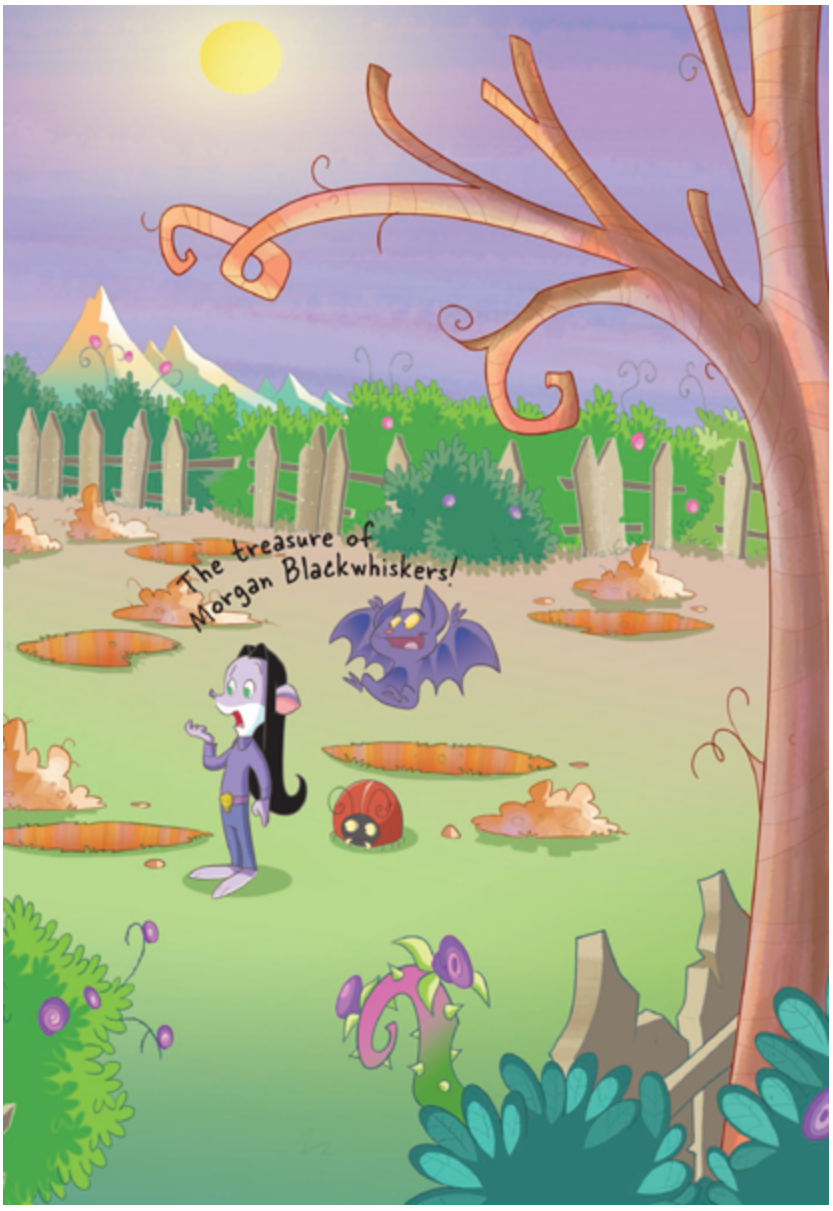
"I was right!" Creepella cried.

"The treasure! The treasure of Morgan Blackwhiskers!"

"Stop talking and open it up!" Bitewing urged impatiently.




We found it!
Umph!


The treasure of
Morgan Blackwhiskers!

What a Fortune, This Fortune!

"Yes, please open it!" Shivereen said eagerly.

Creepella forced open the RUSTY old lock. The lid creaked as she lifted it up.

"Rats and bats!" she cried. "There's a fortune inside!"

Gold coins overflowed from the chest. Each one was stamped with the image of a gentlemouse wearing a wig and crown.

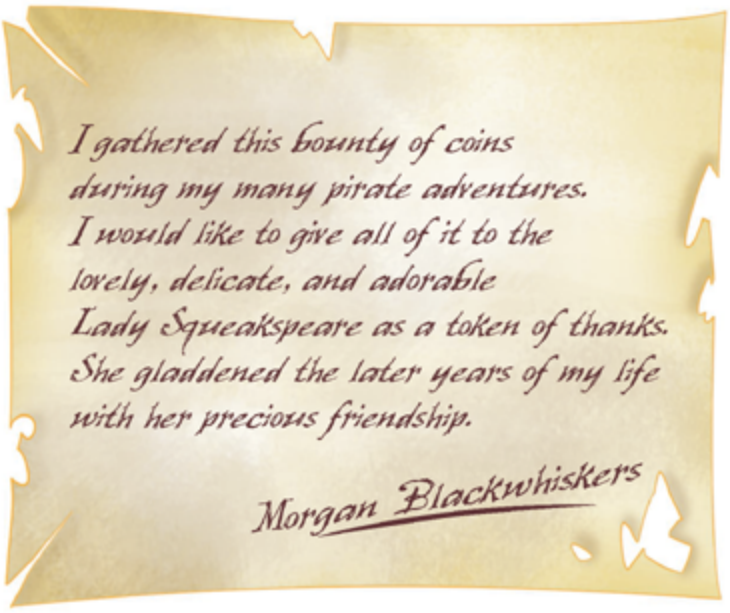


"Who's the dude on the coin?" asked Shivereen.

"King Mousard the Fourth," answered Creepella. "He ruled Mysterious Valley four hundred years ago."

Bitewing took one of the coins and bit it. "OUCH! There's no doubt. It's made of gold! Wonderful gold!"

Creepella pulled a yellowed sheet of paper out of the chest. She read it out loud.



"How ROMANTIC!" sighed Shivereen, drying a tear.

"There's something else written, but it's hard to read," Creepella said, frowning. She **wrinkled** her nose and continued.

I forgot! Old age has dimmed my memory. I can never remember where I hide my things!
If Lady Squeakspeare doesn't find this chest, the treasure will be inherited by her grandchildren.
Or her great-grandchildren. Or her great-great-great-grandchildren. Or whomever finds it—as long as that mouse bears the Squeakspeare name!

"Did you hear, Billy?" Shivereen asked, her voice rising with excitement. "The treasure is yours!"

"I c-c-can't believe it!" Billy stammered, turning red.

"Of course, all of these coins were STOLEN by Blackwhiskers all those years ago," Creepella pointed out. "And since there is no way to return them, you'll simply have to give the money away."

"B-b-but . . . ," Billy protested.

"I suggest that you set up a scholarship for young deserving rodents at the Shivery Arts Academy," she said, ignoring him.

Billy sighed. He knew in his heart that Creepella was right.

"You could also put up a STATUE of Morgan Blackwhiskers in Gloomeria



Square," Creepella went on. "I think Lady Squeakspeare would have liked that."

"It's a great idea," Billy said reluctantly.

Bitewing flew around the chest, curious. "Do any of you smell something peculiar?"

Creepella sniffed the air. "You're right!" she agreed. "That box has a heavenly smell. Maybe there's something underneath the coins."

She plunged her paw into the coins and took out a **yellowish object** covered in green mold. The smell was so strong that Billy **fainted** on the spot.

But Creepella adored the odor. "It's cheese aged to perfection. I'd say it's aged for at least four hundred years!"

"Look how **beautifully moldy** it is!" Shivereen exclaimed.

Billy woke up feeling wobbly and queasy. "I'd say it's **MONSTEROUSLY MOLDY**!" he said.

Then a little worm popped out of the **cheese**. He looked very old, and he had a long beard and glasses.



"What's that?" whimpered Billy nervously.

"It's an **OLD WORM**, of course!" Creepella

answered. "Hmm. I wonder if this cheese is just what Chef Stewrat needs."

"Hooray!" cheered Shivereen. "It's the extra-special ingredient for his SPECIAL MELANCHOLY STEW!"

"B-b-but do you really think that eating cheese that's f-f-four hundred years old is a good idea?" stuttered Billy, holding his nose closed.

"Of course!" Creepella replied. "Let's bring it to him ***pronto***!"

A Horridly Delightful Dinner

"SUPERB! SUBLIME! SUPER!"



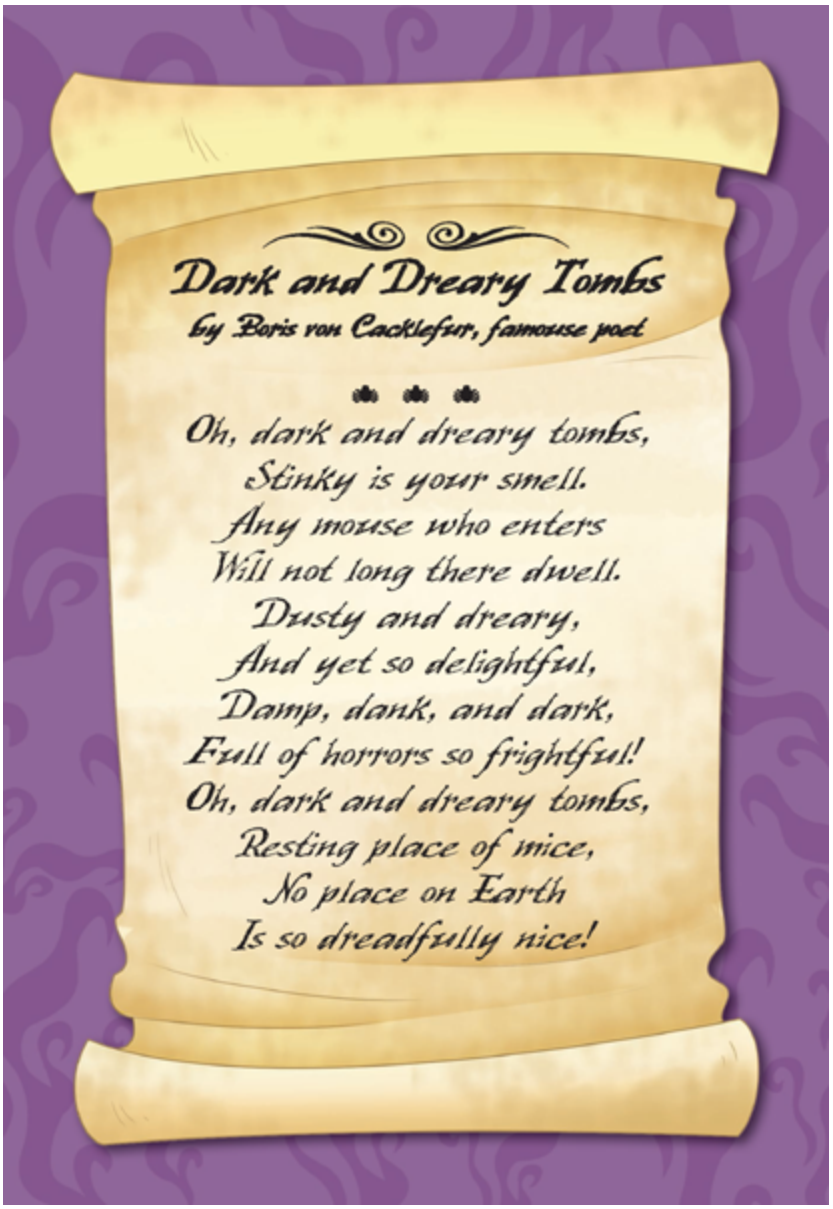
exclaimed Chef Stewrat after he tasted a crumb of the moldy **antique cheese**. The disgusting stench of the cheese soon spread through the castle, making the residents **FEROCIOUSLY** hungry.

"Hold up, Chompers!" warned Creepella as the meat-eating plant dove into the **BUBBLING** stew with a spoon. "That stew is for tonight's feast!"



That night, everyone in Cacklefur Castle got ready for dinner. The ancient building had never looked so **gloomy**. Grandmother Crypt had covered the furniture with shimmering cobwebs, giving the room a beautiful **ghostly** look.

Before sitting down to the feast, Boris von Cacklefur read his poem, "Dark and Dreary Tombs."


Dark and Dreary Tombs
by Boris von Cacklefur, famouse poet
Oh, dark and dreary tombs,
Stinky is your smell.
Any mouse who enters
Will not long there dwell.
Dusty and dreary,
And yet so delightful,
Damp, dank, and dark,
Full of horrors so frightful!
Oh, dark and dreary tombs,
Resting place of mice,
No place on Earth
Is so dreadfully nice!

"What a poet!" "What a genius!" "What a wordsmith!"

Everyone praised Boris's poem. Then they all dug in to Chef Stewrat's SPECIAL MELANCHOLY STEW.



But when Billy had his first bite, he immediately turned green and started to feel sick and QUEASY.

"Excuse me, please," he said, standing up. "I really don't feel well at all."

"Don't be modest, Billy. You look GREAT!" Creepella exclaimed. "That green will match your costume perfectly. Now let's get ready for the ball!"

Billy and Creepella changed into their costumes. They looked GHASTLY.

"You two look fabumously FRIGHTENING," declared Shivereen.


You look great!



A Surprising Guest

Billy was having a hard time moving around in his **GARBAGE CAN** costume. He **TRIPPED** three times trying to jump inside the ***Turborapid 3000***.

"Billy, you look *fantastic* as a garbage can!" Creepella said as she took off at top speed.

The entrance to the Shivery Arts Academy was draped with purple funeral lights and flickering lamps.

"What a **DELIGHTFULLY DREARY** party!" Creepella whispered dreamily.

The courtyard was overflowing with costumed rodents. They were dressed as mummies, vampires, witches, ghosts, ghouls, various monsters—and one garbage can.

The Rattenbaum triplets were there, too. They tried to look glamorous, but instead, they looked comical. Milly's dress was too long, Tilly's was too short, and Lilly's was too large. Pesky little spiders dangled from their wigs, tickling their snouts. Ziggy, the millipede, came with them, and he wore a tap shoe on each of his one thousand tiny little feet!

"What a heavenly sight!"

cooed Creepella.

Poor Billy didn't agree. The guests kept dumping their garbage into his costume. The can got so HEAVY that he couldn't move!


MELANCHOLY
GRAND BALL



He sat on a bench and watched Creepella dance with Ziggy. Finally, Creepella came back to him.

"It's an **unforgettable** party," she sighed. Then she frowned. "There's only one thing missing: the visit of a nice ghost I could interview. I wonder what Blackwhiskers is waiting for. We've found the **treasure**. Isn't he supposed to appear?"

Suddenly, a cold wind whipped around Creepella and Billy. Then a ghost with a long black MUSTACHE and a black BEARD appeared in front of them. It was **Morgan Blackwhiskers**.





he said crossly. "Who is it?"

Creepella clapped her paws with happiness. "Mr. Blackwhiskers! It was my Billy who found your treasure. Right, Billy?"

But poor Billy had fainted. He was sprawled on the ground, surrounded by all the GARBAGE from his costume.

"Billy, why do you always faint just when things get EXCITING?" Creepella asked, shaking her head. Then she turned to the pirate ghost. "That's Billy Squeakspeare. He is related to your FRIEND Lady Squeakspeare."

"A Squeakspeare?" exclaimed the ghost, remembering everything. "Then my treasure is in good paws!"


A g-g-ghost!
Hooray!

"Of course!" declared Creepella. "Now, can we go somewhere a little more quiet, **Mr. Blackwhiskers**? I'd like to have a nice `interview` with you!"





ANOTHER BESTSELLER

Once again, Creepella's new book got rave reviews.

Fans from all over sent letters, text messages, and e-mails, and made phone calls to *The Rodent's Gazette*, asking for another HORROR story right away.

Can you believe the book's biggest Fan was my grandfather William Shortpaws? One morning he BURST into my office, thundering, "Don't be such a lazybones, Grandson! What are you waiting for? When will you publish Creepella von Cacklefur's next book? She is the most awesome HORROR novelist in all of Mysterious Valley."


CREEPELLA VON CACKLEFUR
I'll take one!
She's so beautiful!

"I don't have a clue," I told him. "I never know when my friend will drop a book on my desk."

But my grandfather kept asking me when the next book would come out. He *called* me five times a day! And when Benjamin and Bugsy Wugsy visited me in my office, they seemed **DISAPPOINTED** that I didn't have a new **CREEPELLA** story for them. Even the little mouselets who came to buy Creepella's books asked the same question. I finally decided to send my friend this **MESSAGE**:

Write, Creepella! Write, write, write! We're all waiting for your new bestseller!

Geronimo Stilton,
Editor of *The Rodent's Gazette*





If you liked this book, be sure to check out my next adventure!

RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE

A mysterious old friend of Grandpa Frankenstein shows up one night on the doorstep of Cacklefur Castle. He's a vampire . . . and he's seeking the von Cacklefur family's help. His castle has been infested by strange and troublesome monsters and ghosts, and he's afraid he'll have to move out because of them! Yikes! It's up to Creepella and her family and friends to help this vampire save his home.


1
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1. Mountains of the Mangy Yeti
2. Cacklefur Castle
3. Angry Walnut Tree
4. Rattenbaum Mansion
5. Rancidrat River
6. Bridge of Shaky Steps
7. Squeakspeare Mansion
8. Slimy Swamp
9. Ogre Highway
10. Gloomeria
11. Shivery Arts Academy
12. Horrorwood Studios


MYSTERIOUS VALLEY
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HORRORWOOD
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CACKLEFUR CASTLE

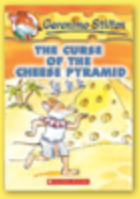
1. Oozing moat
2. Drawbridge
3. Grand entrance
4. Moldy basement
5. Patio, with a view of the moat
6. Dusty library
7. Room for unwanted guests
8. Mummy room
9. Watchtower
10. Creaking staircase
11. Banquet room
12. Garage (for antique hearses)
13. Bewitched tower
14. Garden of carnivorous plants
15. Stinky kitchen
16. Crocodile pool and piranha tank
17. Creepella's room
18. Tower of musky tarantulas
19. Bitewing's tower (with antique contraptions)

And don't miss any of my other fabumouse adventures!





#1 Lost Treasure of the Emerald Eye



#2 The Curse of the Cheese Pyramid



#3 Cat and Mouse in a Haunted House



#4 I'm Too Fond of My Fur!



#5 Four Mice Deep in the Jungle



#6 Paws Off, Cheddarface!



#7 Red Pizzas for a Blue Count



#8 Attack of the Bandit Cats



#9 A Fabumouse Vacation for Geronimo



#10 All Because of a Cup of Coffee



#11 It's Halloween, You 'Fraidy Mouse!



#12 Merry Christmas, Geronimo!



#13 The Phantom of the Subway



#14 The Temple of the Ruby of Fire



#15 The Mona Mousa Code



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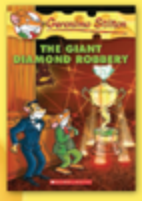
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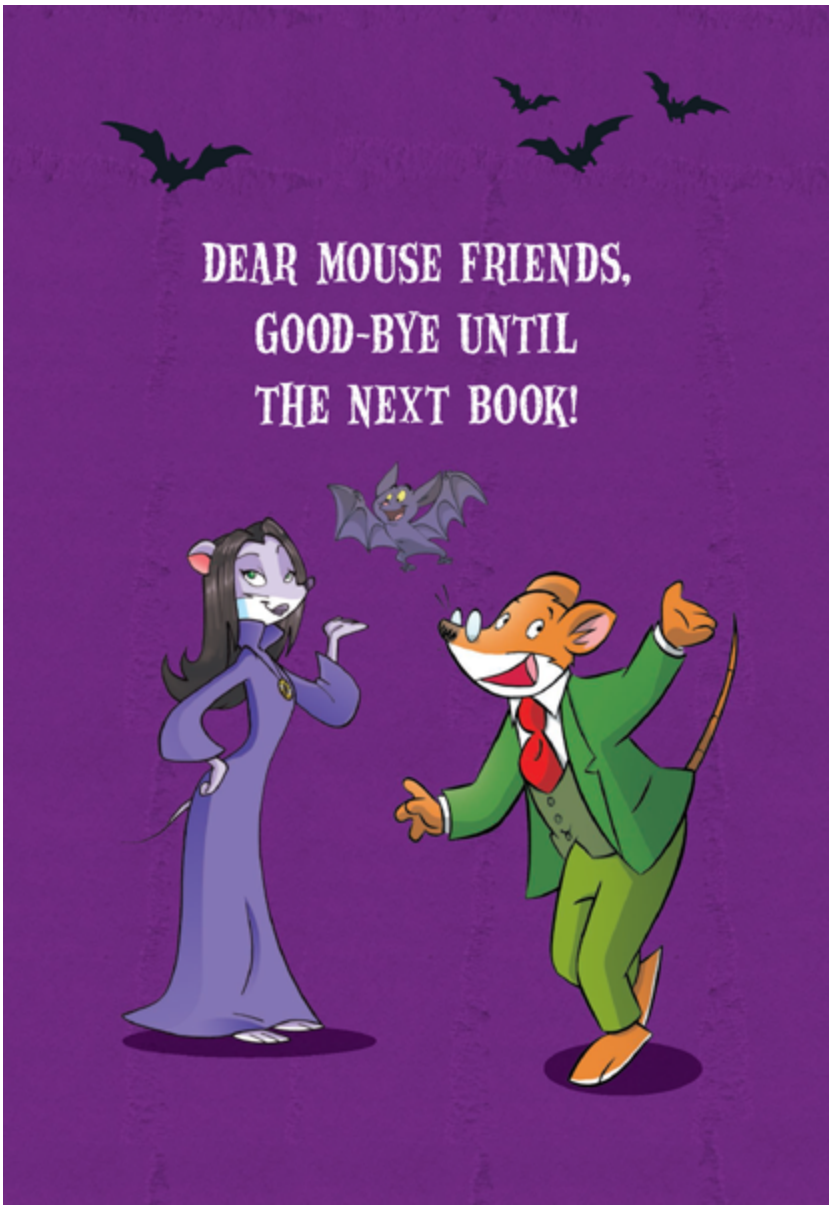
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